

**Governor's Rural Affairs Council
Meeting Minutes – May 3, 2017**

1. The meeting was called to order by Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti at 11:46 am.

2. Roll Call

Member Agencies Present:

Illinois Department of Aging, Leann Dolan
Illinois Department of Agriculture, Don Moffitt
Illinois Department of Employment Security, Jeff Fulgenzi
Illinois Department of Human Services, Francisco Alvarado (phone)
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Valerie Keener
Illinois Department of Public Health, Heide Trenholm
Illinois Department of Public Health, Don Jones (phone)
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Amy Walkenbach
Illinois Community College Board, Lavonne Nelson
Illinois State Board of Education, Colin Hitt (phone)
Southern Illinois University, Nina Antoniotti
Illinois Housing Development Authority, Bill Pluta (phone)
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Christopher Merrett
Illinois Finance Authority, Patrick Evans
Rural Partners, Blanche Shoup

Not Present: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Department of Transportation, University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service, and Illinois Farm Bureau.

Citizen Members Present:

Luke Allen
Todd Kaeb
Sonja Reece
Heather Hampton Knodle
Doug Hanks,
Larry Richards

Nonvoting Members Present:

Kate O'Hara, USDA
Dwight Reynolds, USDA
Norman Walzer, NIU

Lt. Governor's Office Present:

Evelyn Sanguinetti
Derek Cantu
Susan Wynn Bence
Brian Costin

Quorum determined.

3. Opening Remarks

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti welcomed everyone to the Governor's Rural Affairs Council meeting. She requested that anyone wishing to address the council to please sign in with Derek Cantu.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti thanked all of the working group members for meeting prior to the Governor's Rural Affairs Council meeting. She is excited to hear what each group has identified as "what is working, what is not working, and how can the Governor's Rural Affairs Council better support your working group."

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti thanked all of the speakers for attending and sharing their knowledge.

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 24, 2017.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Don Moffitt made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Jeff Fulgenzi. Motion passed. Minutes were approved.

5. Working Group Summaries

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti requested that each Working Group briefly summarize today's meeting.

Economic Development

Heather Hampton Knodle noted that on June 15th this group will meet with DCEO's Red Team. The group also has a meeting scheduled with Chris Collins, USDA telecommunications, which will provide an opportunity to discuss USDA Rural Development funding along with other funding options.

Enterprise Zones – The group is working to expand the number of enterprise zones depending on how the state legislation is written. It may be possible to lower the number of jobs required in the eligibility requirements so that more rural areas would qualify. Even two to four jobs make an impact in rural areas.

2017 Census of Agriculture – The group is hoping to have rural Illinois counted. Heather noted that the state's initiatives to lower fees for Limited Liability Companies (LLC) will benefit agriculture since family farms often have a business structures.

Rural Reverse Funding Rally– Heather requested that Dwight Reynolds and Kate O'Hara share what is happening with these rallies. Kate explained that the first one was held in Moline. It had 8 presentations along with 10 funders in attendance as well as others on the phone. She mentioned that the presenters felt better prepared to request funding after the rally. Dwight noted that the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) has developed a model to be used for these rallies. He thanked Chris Merrett for the help provided by the IIRA. Heather continued that a technical support and resources document or guide needs to be provided. Brian Costin stated that a document was already in place in DCEO's archives. It would need to be resurrected and updated. Heather wanted to know regarding implementing telecommunications exactly how much fiber optic is in place throughout the state and if there has been any research that would show this information? How can the state provide fiber optics or allow private companies to do so in rural areas? The Broadband Illinois website has some information on broadband coverage and performance measures.

Legislative Front – Heather noted that nothing is happening with current legislation to lower Limited Liability Company (LLC) filing fees during this session. In addition, SB2012 – Angel Investment has reached a compromise. Funds in the amount of \$250,000 have been set aside for both rural and women/minority business. Heather also mentioned that the HUD Economic Empowerment Zone website provides a database of unemployment and poverty rates which communities might be able to use to offer incentives such as lower sales tax.

Todd Kaeb stated he was excited about the USDA and IIRA working together. He is hoping to develop “10 Point Principles” to be helpful for new mayors.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti thanked the working group for reporting.

She mentioned that she is excited to meet the new USDA Director, Sonny Purdue. The Lt. Governor also wanted to mention that if her office can help with anything, please be sure to contact Susan Wynn Bence.

Workforce Development

Norm Walzer reported that their group has been working on identifying declining population rates, teacher shortages by topics and location, and training programs for food industry technicians.

Doug Hanks stated that the Bi-Annual Convention for food industry technicians is looking for a home with a community college which would be a training ground for the state of Illinois. LaVonne Nelson stated that this program would guarantee 100-250 jobs once the program is running.

LaVonne stated that this group is working on four strategies: Increase Early Career-Related Education and Exposure, address essential and occupational skill gaps, align education and training programs to employers, and strengthen connections among public partners and engagement and alignment with business. She mentioned that she is in the process of reviewing the recommendations and will post the information on the Illinois Community College Board website.

Norm noted that rural needs are not been adequately met. There is a critical shortages of nurses. Senate Bill 888 would allow community colleges to provide BA degrees for nursing programs.

Jeff Fulgenzi stated there is an unmet demand for nurses in various regions. If this bill is passed, 10 community colleges would be able to allow BSN degrees. Jeff noted that 22 other states allow community colleges to provide these degrees. Norm mentioned that workforce demand is currently not being met. LaVonne stated the senate should vote on this bill in the next couple weeks.

This would be great for nurses in rural areas and would help keep nurses in rural areas since many would be able to obtain a degree locally at community colleges such as Carl Sandburg College. Norm stated that workforce is changing in the next 15 years. He thinks it would be interesting to conduct research comparing what is needed today versus what will be needed in the future.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti thanked this the Workforce Development group for their efforts.

Healthcare

Sonja Reece mentioned that summer meals program is an ongoing and important issue. Next issues are: opioid bill and telehealth. She noted that other topics include: mental health in schools; transportation; better healthcare for veterans and homeless; teen dating violence; infant mortality; neonatal care; oral healthcare; fall prevention; volunteers to identify who need what; and ag safety – rescue tubes for fire departments to use in grain bin accidents.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti noted that the Opioid bill to limit prescriptions to 7 days has passed the committee. She thanked all of those who supported this bill. Unfortunately, this bill was unable to be voted on during this session.

Education

Chris Merrett mentioned that the CEO program which teaches high school students about entrepreneurial training is a great program. He noted that Blanche Shoup is the fiscal agent for the Carthage school. This working group is hoping more schools will implement the program. It costs the school district nothing. High schools need to realize this is a viable rewarding career path and would encourage youth to remain in communities. In addition, it would be advantageous to include farmers in this program.

Chris mentioned another topic is connected to schools is cooperatives. Currently the IIRA does have a USDA cooperative development grant. Norm mentioned that he has been working on the topic “Community Supportive Businesses.” Luke Allen noted that 35 schools are current operating cooperative businesses. He hopes to expand this number and would like to see business teachers work with students to develop cooperatives. Cooperatives could operate as childcare centers, grocery stores, grain elevators, etc. Norm mentioned that there is a report on the NIU CGS website. The Lt. Governor encouraged all groups to use Norm so that he won’t retire.

6. Advancement of Telehealth in Illinois

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti introduced Nina Antoniotti. She asked Nina to explain how telehealth works. She mentioned that she has visited a couple of these sites and feels that telehealth could improve rural communities. Senate Bill 1811, introduced by Senator Altoff, amends the Medical Practice Act. It redefines telehealth and exceptions in the field. The Senator is hoping to use this bill to advance telehealth. The legislation would help telehealth spread by making it easier for health care practitioners get reimbursed for services provided via telehealth.

Nina Antoniotti announced that Telehealth Day will be May 17, 2017, at the Capitol. This is an opportunity to help legislatures understand how telehealth works from a patient and a doctor’s viewpoint. There will be a telehealth summit in the fall. She is currently working with the Lt. Governor’s staff to improve the language in Medicaid so as to eliminate barriers for individuals wishing to use telehealth. One barrier is the payment policy in the state’s healthcare plans.

She is currently working on providing a more comprehensive policy that will include the option of using telehealth. This would eliminate the need for transportation and remove the access to healthcare barrier that some rural communities which ultimately would improve the quality of life for rural residents.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti stated that currently telehealth is a “hot” topic. Nina mentioned that if we could introduce telehealth into homeless centers it would help a patient who has stopped taking their medication to help get back on track faster. This would help patients secure faster access to health care, thereby improving their overall health.

The Lt. Governor asked if there were any questions. Blanche Shoup wanted to know if the infrastructure in rural communities would prevent telehealth. She mentioned that while telehealth reduces the need for transportation; how difficult is it to make telehealth available in rural areas due to the lack of fiber optic infrastructure.

Nina explained that most schools can have enough broadband to support the telehealth system. Some areas may have to use “hot spots” which is a big barrier to the use of telehealth. Blanche noted that she may need to use the strategy of “critical loss of life” to move this to the top of the legislature.

Luke Allen asked if there will be mobile locations. Nina explained that due to the fact that if the van breaks down, the complete office is down mobile locations are not an option at this time. In addition, a CDL may be required to drive the van. She does think that mobile vans may be a good option for dental.

Nina reminded all that the telehealth summit is tentatively set for the first week of November.

7. Annual Report Discussion

Chris Merrett explained that the Governor’s Rural Affairs Council Annual Report was due to the general assembly by August 1. Chris requested that each agency provide a summary of what your agency has done so that it could be included in the annual report. If your agency has not submitted a report, please do so soon. He also noted that these reports help the GRAC to be data driven.

Chris requested that everyone refer to the handout that was distributed earlier. He explained that the report would include updated and additional figures. He thanked the Illinois Department of Public Health for their fabulous maps on their website. He wants to make sure that agencies include what they are currently doing in non-metro areas. He requested that since there are so many new representatives to the council, Susan email last year’s report so that each agency can use last year’s as a sample of what is needed to be reported.

Don Moffitt mentioned that this was an excellent presentation and noted that agriculture is not just farming. Heather Hampton Knodle stated that it is great that all are sharing a vision for the state. A discussion was held on the size of the average farm and the number of farms overall. Norm Walzer noted that a large percentage of farm income is actually from other sources.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti thanked Chris for the report. She also thanked all of the working groups for their efforts. If you have any problems, please reach out to Susan Wynn Bence. The final day for the draft is July 14, 2017, please be sure to send your reports to Chris in advance of the deadline.

8. New Business

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti requested all to save the meeting dates on their calendar.

2017 GRAC meeting dates:

7-19	Macomb	11 am	Western IL University
12-6	Springfield	11 am	Department of AG State Fair Grounds

Other calendar items include:

8-10 to 8-20	Springfield	Illinois State Fair
8-26 to 9-5	DuQuoin	DuQuoin State Fair
8-29 to 8-31	Decatur	Farm Progress Show

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti turned the meeting over to Susan Wynn Bence.

Susan requested that each member provide a brief update.

9. Member Updates

Patrick Evans / Illinois Finance Authority

- a. Thanked Dwight Reynolds for holding the Reverse Funding Rallies.
- b. Working with hospitals and universities for renovations.
- c. Working with communities for loans for ambulances and fire trucks.

LaVonne Nelson / ICCB

- a. Working on early career related education.
- b. Working on aligning education/training to employers' needs.
- c. Strengthening connections among public parties.
- d. Working to identify essential occupations.
- e. Relating to Community College Board – Implementation of Workforce and Opportunities Act.

Blanche Shoup / Workforce Development Board / Rural Partners

- a. Distributed Rural Partners agenda for next meeting, which is planned for Peoria.
- b. Hoping to network and blend resources to help rural development.

Heather Hampton Knodle / Citizen Representative

- a. IL Ag Women to be held in November 2018.
- b. Montgomery County trade show was held.
- c. Fiber optic provider to come to Montgomery County.
- d. Farm Bill task force.

Todd Kaeb / Citizen Representative

- a. In reflecting on the earlier discussion on the diversity of the rural economy, and even rural farms, he noted that his largest customer farms 50,000 acres while the average customer has 4,000 – 6,000 acres. Also there are multiple with 500 – 1500 acres. Noted that all are needed and hence, we need diverse rural development strategies.
- b. Noted that community colleges are keeping youth local. Thanks Chris Merrett for points made in earlier discussion.

Leann Dolan / Agency on Aging

- a. Seniors Farmers Market July 1 coupons available through Agency.
- b. Announced Burt Weber has passed away. A memorial will be held on May 15.

Don Moffitt / IL Department of Agriculture

- a. Planning on going to DuQuoin State Fair and IL State Fair.
- b. Problems with maintenance of IL Fairgrounds.
- c. Galesburg has closed testing site for diseased animals.
- d. Working to secure rescue tubes for fire department responding to grain bin entrapments.

Nina Antoniotti / SIU School of Medicine

- a. SIU has 3 campuses.
- b. Medical resident match is normally 110 – only 79 this year.
- c. Budget impacts ability to take care of patients and affects ability to raise donor funds.
- d. Starting rural dental clinic in July.
- e. Recruiting specialist doctors.

Sonja Reece / Citizen Representative

- a. Starting search for County Public Health Director.
- b. New sales tax of \$.25 will help address funds for behavior/mental health issues, expand jail, pay staff.
- c. Working on grants for innovation in McLean County area.

Amy Walkenbach / IEPA

- a. EPA potential impacts from federal budget. Pass through grants may be zeroed out.
- b. State is now able to loan for infrastructure projects with low interest loans.

Luke Allen / IL Ag Education

- a. Researching “what does Ag education look like in the future.”
- b. Goals to increase Ag education by 10%.
- c. Shortage of Ag teachers continues to be a problem.
- d. IL is 1st state to offer online Ag education classes. There are 25 other states who have adopted the IL Ag curriculum.

Jeff Fulgenzi / IDES

- a. Working on mobile apps to update technology.
- b. Data will be available by regions.
- c. Business with 25+ employees will provide monthly wage info.
- d. Lt. Governor noted that message will also be in Spanish.

Bill Pluta / IHDA

- a. He has submitted the report for GRAC.
- b. IDHA has approved 908 loans with 8 different rental housing projects and 640 affordable housing units.
- c. Starting Rural Housing Technical Assistance and is working with IIRA and Community Action.
- d. Noted that Macoupin Homes was awarded best project at the Annual Governor’s Housing Conference.

Don Jones / IDPH

- a. Co-sponsoring Opioid Conference in the fall.
- b. Announced that the waiver program was extended to September 2017 which allows physicians from other countries to come and practice in rural Illinois. This waiver may be extended to 2021.

Francisco Alvarado / IDHS

- a. Working to make services available for people with disabilities in rural areas.
- b. Partnering with “One Stop Comprehensive Centers”.

10. Public Comment

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti asked if there were any public comments. Derek Cantu stated no.

11. Adjournment

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti thanked everyone for their time and dedication.

Jeff Fulgenzi made a motion to adjourn. Sonja Reece seconded the motion.

Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 1:52pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Chris Merrett

Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs

Western Illinois University